



HB1203 – Certificates of Birth and Marriage Certificates - Issuance of New Certificates - Sex Designation

Presented to the Hon. Shane Pendergrass and
Members of the House Health and Government Operations Committee
March 2, 2021 at 1:30 p.m.

POSITION: SUPPORT

NARAL Pro-Choice Maryland urges Members of the House Health and Government Operations Committee to issue a **favorable report on HB1203 – Certificates of Birth and Marriage Certificates - Issuance of New Certificates - Sex Designation**, sponsored by Delegate Lisa Belcastro.

Our organization is an advocate for reproductive health, rights, and justice. As part of our efforts to protect reproductive freedom for all Marylanders, we work to ensure every individual has the right to decide if, when, and how to form their families, and to parent in good health, in safety, and with dignity. This includes allowing all Marylanders to have their gender identity correctly identified on government issued documents. This is vital for not only a person's comfort and validation, but to protect them from any form of discrimination. Accordingly, we support requiring the Maryland Secretary of the Department of Health to issue a new birth certificate to include a parent's corrected sex, as well as a new marriage license to include a party's corrected name/sex. Importantly, this new certificate will in no way indicate the alteration, protecting the individual from discrimination or harassment.

According to the National Center for Transgender Equality, [nearly one-third of individuals with identification documents that did not match their presentation reported a negative experience](#), including harassment, being asked to leave an establishment, and even physical attacks. Additionally, people of color represent a disproportionate amount of these experiences, with [Middle Easterners 5 times as likely and Black people twice as likely to report discrimination](#).ⁱ Clearly, this issue goes beyond gender-based discrimination—it exacerbates racism, and allows for many other types of discrimination to thrive.

Generally, we tend to consider items such as driver's licenses and an individual's own birth certificates to be common forms of ID. However, individuals regularly use marriage licenses and birth certificates of children for things like health benefits, taxes, applying for loans, and yes, proving identity. Therefore, allowing for and protecting name/gender changes on marriage license and children's birth certificates is a practical matter of absolute necessity.

Not only are official name and gender changes an important part of helping individuals feel comfortable with their identity, but it can often be a matter of safety. It is our duty to protect every Marylander from any and all discrimination, especially those as vulnerable as the trans community. For these reasons, NARAL Pro-Choice Maryland **urges a favorable committee report on HB1203**. Thank you for your time and consideration.

ⁱ James, S. E., Herman, J. L., Rankin, S., Keisling, M., Mottet, L., & Anafi, M. (2016). The Report of the 2015 U.S. Transgender Survey. Washington, DC: National Center for Transgender Equality.